

Ed Welburn's Favorite Five

GM's Vice President of Global Design Picks his TOP FIVE CADILLACS FOR THE AGES

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Haggerty.com

Spring 2015

This piece appeared in Haggerty's quarterly publication. It caught my eye because I am a fan of the GM designers like Harley Earl, Bill Mitchell, Chuck Jordan and GM's current lead designer, Ed Welburn. You may have noticed Mr. Welburn on one of the automobile fan sites or at a high-end auction broadcast. He's the man who sits behind Harley Earl's old desk. In fact, he makes sure that GM employs a staff just to keep that office and its furniture identical to the way it was when Earl occupied it himself!

You can find the piece yourself on Haggerty's site, but here is what caught my eye: **Ed's Top Five Cadillacs!** He sketched out twenty models in his first draft, but settled on these five – not in any particular order apparently. I have taken the liberty of summarizing the descriptions – I hope you enjoy. Doug

1949 Series 75 Imperial Limousine:

Perfectly proportioned. With the all-new overhead valve V-8 engine it was magnificent. "Every detail on this car is exquisite." One of the most luxurious and largest Cadillacs ever. The most expensive body style in the '49 lineup, at \$5,170. Only 626 were produced. [Editor's Note: The CLC Museum's data indicates there were 651.]



1949 Series 61 Club Coupe: Inspired by the twin-boom P-38's tailfins that Earl designed into the 1948 models, the '49 was the first to sport the overhead valve V-8. But it also showed off a new, absolutely magnificent egg-crate grill with a big domed hood and a regal execution of the Cadillac crest. The Club Coupe ("Sedanette") featured the windswept fastback styling and a simplicity that belied both earlier and later models. Ed says he would rather have either of the '49 models on his list than a Rolls-Royce. A post-script: Welburn maintains that his favorite decade of Cadillac design is the Fifties, and this '49 opened the door for that great decade.



[Editor: The Fifties is the most popular decade with the Peach State region as well! Call that good taste shared...]

1934 V-16 Victoria Convertible: A more sculptured shape than the other real Classics. The flow of the line, the proportion, the execution and balance all recommend this car highly. History has an impact as well, and engineering has its value – but for Welburn it’s the style, grace, finesse, proportion and attention to detail that wins his heart. This car has all of that in its fender shapes and its art deco styling. The fastback of this same generation was on Ed’s short list (see Honorable Mentions below).



1953 Eldorado Convertible: This is a very “Hollywood-looking car.” Our designer sees Frank Sinatra, Duke Ellington and Marilyn Monroe in this car. People all over the world would know it instantly. And it’s certainly not a humble design. It stands out! What Welburn calls “conical protrusions” we call Dagmars, and he likes them too. (He sees Harley Earl’s military references in planes and missiles more so than the anatomical parts most of us imagine.) A great stance with great proportions, including the rounded deck and prominent fins. Noted is the rarity of well-pronounced rear ends: He believes this car has the most distinctive rear end design of them all. And Cadillac honors rear end treatments to this day. [Ed.: Pretty sure this is member Dick Peden’s ’53 Eldo, displayed at Hilton Head Island concours a few years ago. Note the Georgia tag. Peach State CLC was on the field that weekend!]



1968 Eldorado Coupe: What is striking is the amazing sheet metal. Tailored like an Armani suit. One has to wonder along with Welburn, “How did they produce that body – stamp it and weld it together?” This Eldorado has a totally different look from the Toronado that used the same front-wheel drive platform. The Cadillacs of



today resemble it in their faceted look and creases. He notes the relationship of the Eldorado's grille with the '49's egg-crate look.

Honorable Mention:

Any early Thirties Fleetwood-bodied V-16 "Madam X": Offered in a number of different coach configurations. Mysterious, intriguing, and exciting. (right)



1934 V-16 Victoria Fastback: Sister ship to the '34 convertible that made Ed's Top Five list. For the same reasons! (left)

1941 Cadillacs of fenders, and Rob Johns' is



all models: Bold hoods, prominent tasteful use of chrome. (right) [Ed. Alpine White!]

1957 Eldorado Brougham: Everything about this car is hand-crafted like a one-off show car. No B pillar above the beltline, with very short rear suicide-doors, it's really a four-door coupe. Only "the complexities of its design" make it fall short of Ed's Top Five list. (left)



1961 Fleetwood: Although his daily driver is a CTS coupe, he says there are times when he would like to go out in the evening in a '61 Fleetwood.

Why not one of the 1959 Cadillacs?



Not for Ed!
An iconic design, but a caricature and a cartoon symbol of excess.

Think "Daddy Warbucks." Ed Welburn said it, not I!
Doug